

## La casada infiel – Federico García Lorca

A Lydia Cabrera y a su negrita

Y qué yo me la llevé al río  
creyendo que\_era mozuela,  
pero tenía marido.

10 syllables;  
the rhymes  
are on L1 & L3.

*Rhythm:*

x x X x x x X x X x  
x X x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x

## The unfaithful wife

To Lydia Cabrera and to her little black girl

[meaning her Afro-Cuban tales – J.F.]

And that me, I took her off to th' river,  
believing she was a lassie,  
while she in fact had a husband!

Presented in the following as in spoken poetry — and thus complying with the poetic rules of the Spanish "romance":

La casada infiel – ¡y qué!  
Yo me la llevé al río  
creyendo que\_era mozuela,  
pero tenía marido.

8 syllables  
+ 8 = 16 syllables;  
the rhymes  
are on L2 & L4.

x x X x x X x X  
X x x x X x X x  
x X x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x

The unfaithful wife – and so what!  
Me, I took her off to th' river,  
believing she was a lassie,  
while she in fact had a husband.

*Mismatches:*

xXxxXxxX

Fue la noche de Santiago  
y casi por compromiso.  
Se\_apagaron los faroles  
y se\_encendieron los grillos.  
En las últimas esquinas  
toqué sus pechos dormidos,  
y se me\_abrieron de pronto  
como ramos de jacintos.  
El almidón de su\_enagua  
me sonaba\_en el oído,  
como\_una pieza de seda  
rasgada por diez cuchillos.  
Sin luz de plata\_en sus copas  
los árboles han crecido,  
y\_un horizonte de perros  
ladra muy lejos del río.

X x X x x x X x  
x X x x X x X x  
X x X x x x X x  
x X x X x x X x  
x x X x X x X x  
x X x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
X x X x x x X x  
X x X x x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
x X x x X x X x  
x X x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x

'Twas the Night of Santiago,  
and almost by obligation:  
all the lanterns going out and  
the crickets enflaming each other.  
By the very farthest corners  
I touched her breasts, as yet sleeping,  
and to me promptly they opened  
as racemes of hyacinths would.  
Starched was her petticoat, rustling;  
this would sound, as then I heard it,  
just like a silk piece of fabric  
were cut by ten knives to tatters.  
No silver light on their top twigs,  
the trees now have grown much taller;  
and a horizon of dogs is  
barking real far from the river.

XxXxXxxx

\*

\*

Pasadas las zarzamoras,  
los juncos y los espinos,  
bajo su mata de pelo  
hice\_un hoyo sobre\_el limo.  
Yo me quité la corbata.  
Ella se quitó\_el vestido.  
Yo\_el cinturón con revólver.  
Ella sus cuatro corpiños.  
Ni nardos ni caracolas  
tienen el cutis tan fino,  
ni los cristales con luna  
relumbran con ese brillo.  
Sus muslos se me\_escapaban  
como peces sorprendidos,  
la mitad llenos de lumbre,  
la mitad llenos de frío.  
Aquella noche corrí  
el mejor de los caminos,  
montado\_en potra de nácar  
sin bridas y sin estribos.  
No quiero decir, por hombre,  
las cosas que\_ella me dijo.  
La luz del entendimiento  
me\_hace ser muy comido.  
Sucia de besos y\_arena  
yo me la llevé del río.  
Con el aire se batían  
las espadas de los lirios.

7 syllables  
+ 8 = 15 syllables

x X x x X x X x  
x X x x X x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
X x X x x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
x X x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
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x X x X x x X x  
x X x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
X x X x x x X x  
X x X x x x X x

Beyond the blackberry brambles,  
the reed-grasses and the hawthorns,  
under the hairs of her tuft I  
made a hole above the silt mud.  
I rid myself of my neck-tie.  
She rid herself of her costume.  
I of my belt and revolver.  
She then of all her four corsets.  
No seashells, no tuberoses  
have such a fine smooth complexion,  
nor does the moonlight cause crystals  
to shine with this dazzling brilliance.  
Her thighs slipped from me as quickly  
as would schools of startled fishes,  
of which one half full of fire,  
of which one half full of freezing.  
It was that night that I came  
down the best of all the pathways,  
upon a filly of nacre,  
no bridles nor any stirrups.  
I won't, as a man, repeat them,  
the things to me she kept saying.  
The light of our understanding  
makes me prefer much discretion.  
Her, soiled with sand and with kisses,  
me, I took her off from th' river.  
With the breeze there was a-battling  
every sword of every iris.

xXxXxxXx

xXxxXxXx

Me porté como quien soy.  
Como\_un gitano legítimo.  
Le regalé\_un costurero  
grande de raso pajizo,  
y no quise\_enamorarme  
porque teniendo marido  
me dijo que\_era mozuela  
cuando la llevaba\_al río.

7 syllables  
+ 9 = 16 syllables

X x X x x x X  
X x x X x x X x x  
x X x x X x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
x X x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
x X x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x  
X x x X x x X x

I behaved as who I am.  
All as a Gypsy, a trueborn one.  
I gave her a sewing basket,  
big, lined with straw-coloured satin,  
and I would not get enamoured  
since, although having a husband,  
she told me she was a lassie  
as I took her off to th' river.

## Comments on "La casada infiel" (The unfaithful wife) by Federico García Lorca

In these notes we will be concerned with just a few basic considerations, hopefully allowing to get the gist of this poem, the 6th of 18 poems in Federico García Lorca's "Primer romancero gitano" (First collection of Gypsy ballads), and probably the most universal one among them – if we aren't fooled by its somewhat burlesque façade.

Let's first have a look at a few formal aspects of the poem, then at the setting with the two protagonists and their different ways of interpreting the woman's claim that she is a "mozuela" (lassie), before going through the poem in more detail, in a running commentary.

### I – Formal aspects

The poem can be perceived in two different fashions: (1) it can be **seen** as the piece of **written poetry** we find in the book, and (2) it can be **heard** as a piece of **spoken poetry** (or song), as befitting a ballad or a Spanish *romance*.

Here we should remember the two poetic rules of the Spanish *romance* :

One of those two rules initially requires long lines of 16 syllables, later becoming couplets of 8 + 8 syllables, with some tolerance for couplets of 7 + 9 syllables or 9 + 7 syllables.

The other rule requires rhymes, throughout the *romance*, on the same couple of vowels (*i-o* in the occurrence), and the rhymes logically have to be at the end of the initial 16-syllable line – that is, on the even lines of each couplet of 8 syllables.

Now it is easy to see that the beginning of the **written** poem at hand does not comply with those rules: S1L1 has 10 syllables, and the rhyme *i-o* falls on this first (odd) line and on S1L3, instead of falling on S1L2. One might even go as far as counting the lines not per stanza but throughout the poem, and thus find that **all** the rhymes are on odd lines...

And it is just as easy to see that in the **oral** presentation, integrating the title into the poem, the rules are perfectly applied. The first stanza here has 8 syllables per line, and the rhymes in *i-o* are on the even lines (in this first stanza, and thence throughout the whole poem).

The other two couplets with exceptional syllable counts (S3L17-18 with 7 + 8 = 15 syllables, and S4L1-2 with 7 + 9 = 16 syllables) will be discussed below, at their respective places in the running commentary.

The overall tone of the poem is that of a retrospect, told in past tenses, except for the present tense in the ever-valid comparisons in S3L9-12 and in the narrator's comment on what (in the narrative's present) he is unwilling to reveal (S3L21-24).

In this retrospect, however, the mental positions of the Gypsy differ, depending on which version we perceive (written or oral), and this oscillation reflects the man's overall uncertainty as contrasting with his macho attitude.

### II – The setting and the protagonists

#### a) Time and place

The scene plays on a 25th of July, day of Santiago (Saint James), patron saint of Spain.

Like the other 17 poems of the collection, this one too is set in Andalusia in southern Spain. We are in an unidentified village, possibly somewhere near Granada. But there is also a wink at Santiago de Cuba, through the dedication. The poems of the collection were written between 1924 and 1927 and the book was published in 1928. Lydia Cabrera had come to Paris in 1927, to study at the École du Louvre, and she only had discovered the Afro-Cuban culture "a orillas del Sena" (on the banks of the Seine), as she herself puts it.

Lorca also dedicates the poem "a su negrita" (to her little black girl), meaning the Afro-Cuban tales she had begun to research for and write in 1928 (in Spanish, published in translation by French magazines), and so we are entitled to surmise that this might well be a last-minute dedication. Later, in 1930, Lydia Cabrera showed Lorca around in Cuba, and in his "Poeta en Nueva York" (Poet in New York), the closing poem "Son de negros en Cuba" (Son-music of Blacks in Cuba) is

overjoyed with its refrain "iré a Santiago" (I'm going to Santiago), the tone of which very much resembles Leonard Cohen's "You got me singing".

We can safely exclude Santiago de Compostela in Galicia in north-western Spain from our considerations, along with its famous pilgrimage (which was dormant until well into the 1950s).

The Gypsies have their own pilgrimage and celebration, taking place on 24-25th Mai, two months before St James's Day (25th July), and it is a pilgrimage to Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, the capital of the Camargue. There the Gypsies pay homage to Sara, the Black Virgin (according to legend, Sara was a French Gypsy princess who welcomed and sheltered the first Christians having fled from Palestine over the Mediterranean, and who became the first European Christian).

In 1921 the archbishop of Aix countered much of the local hostility towards the Gypsies when he established the 25th-Mai mass for Gypsies, to be held in the crypt of the church of Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

In this historical context, I can't see any good reason why Santiago de Compostela, or any idea of pilgrimage, should be introduced into the poem "La casada infiel".

Another point we can safely exclude is what we might call "19th-century prudish petty-bourgeois townspeople's moralising mentality".

We are in a small village with only a few streets skirting the central square where the dancing is taking place. In such sedentary rural places, where everybody knows everybody (and everybody's secrets), and where each family has known each family (and their secrets) for uncounted generations, such a mentality along with meddling in other people's affairs would make a peaceful coexistence impossible – and straight away entail hostility against such meddlers.

As long as no financial or territorial interests are at stake, it is of primordial importance "to live and let live", and to leave private matters alone – including people's sex-life, especially with strangers. (If the Gypsy had been one of the villagers, he would obviously have known that the woman was married.)

## **b) The basic misunderstanding between the Gypsy and the woman**

The poem hinges on the incompatible ways the Gypsy and the woman understand the term "mozuela" she uses. It is from there that the rest of the whole discomfiture derives – and in Leonard Cohen's answering poem ("The Faithless Wife") and song ("The Night of Santiago") this misunderstanding is absent. That explains the totally different developments, Lorca's Gypsy being a nasty rascal, Leonard Cohen's Gypsy a perfect gentleman.

The Spanish terms *mozo* and *moza* mean *lad* and *lass*. The respective diminutives *mozuelo* and *mozuela* mean *laddie* and *lassie*. So far things are easy enough.

But Lorca's Gypsy (and Leonard Cohen's) start out on the underlying assumption that a single man is not supposed to allow a leftover wallflower to wither by the dancing-floor. And now what is this married woman doing there? Where is the husband, whom we never see?

Later, in "Poeta en Nueva York" (Poet in New York), Lorca will extensively use the notion of "hueco" (empty space) – and here we can already see it at work: we are invited to find out.

A rather innocent hypothesis might suggest that he's travelling abroad, maybe on a business trip.

A less innocent hypothesis – we are in the rural setting of a small Andalusian village! – would suggest that he may well be present on the village square, but not interfering. In the 1920s and before, Evil was even more powerful in the western world than today, and homosexuals like Lorca lived in permanent danger of being molested or persecuted by some rabble or authority. One way of reducing such risks was the alibi-marriage – which nobody in the village would be duped by, but which outsiders would not too easily see through. And the villagers' best interest, as I said above, would be not to reveal other people's secrets lest their own should be made public as well.

Such an alibi-marriage would obviously imply sexual freedom on both sides, here in particular on the side of the woman who, as we'll see, is not exactly the village beauty-queen.

Her understanding of the term "mozuela" (lassie) she uses is, "I'm a consenting adult", and since this won't be the first time she proceeds that way, she will think that she has been clear enough.

For Lorca's Gypsy however, who doesn't know that she's married (Leonard Cohen's Gypsy knows it), her phrase (addressing a traveller!) sounds like "I'm becoming an old maid, stuck here in this

village." So his reaction towards this less-than-beauty-queen is not so much a reaction of sexual self-interest but rather a reaction of charity, not wishing to leave this woman to wither without having tried his best.

In the retrospective view the Gypsy is providing us with, he is clearly cross at the woman because of this subjectively felt abuse of his benevolence, but possibly even more so because of another mishap we'll have to work out – and which would never have befallen him if he hadn't thought that she was in desperate need of a man.

### III – A running commentary

#### Stanza 1

The two ways of perceiving this stanza, written *versus* oral, show us the Gypsy still taken aback by his own gullibility, back then, *versus* an attitude of defiance, affirming his masculinity. The underlying tone of the poem as a whole changes accordingly: self-doubt *versus* machismo.

#### Stanza 2

**L1-4:** We are informed of the time and of the quasi-obligation the Gypsy feels himself under: 25th July, at the end of the village festivities, with the lanterns running out of oil and sexual arousal taking over.

**L5-8:** The two of them leave the village, and he begins the foreplay. Comparing the woman's breasts to hyacinths is somewhat ambiguous, since we might read the "ramos" (racemes) as her nipples rising – but with difficulty. Her breasts might also be seen as pretty wrinkled.

**L9-12:** The man explores the woman's dress with his fingernails, which he compares to "cuchillos" (knives). Here again, sexual arousal is present, but to a limited extent only.

**L13-16:** Other couples also have left the village, where the stonewalls are giving off the summer-heat stored during the day, for the cooler air by the river – and the men's "arboles" (trees) are growing out of their foreskins. Those couples' panting, "muy lejos" (very far – namely out of sight in the shelter of the dark, but clearly audible), is demeaningly compared to the barking of dogs.

#### Stanza 3

**L1-4:** Reaching the riverbank, the Gypsy continues his foreplay, and in his retrospective account he compares the woman's private parts to "limo" (silt mud).

**L5-7:** In this description of an unbalanced anti-striptease, the woman undresses completely; the man does not. We wonder why on earth he is wearing a "corbata" (necktie) on this hot 25th July, but from his "cinturón con revólver" (belt and revolver, necessarily a toy-gun), we understand that he is wearing a cowboy costume, and that in this village the Santiago festivities include a carnival.

**L8:** This line works differently in Spanish and in English.

In Spanish, the "cuatro corpiños" (four bodices or corsets) will not be understood straight away as exactly 4 (not 3, and not 5). That number "cuatro" (four), in colloquial language and especially with a possessive pronoun, will at first be understood as "a small number of items forming some kind of unit". In English, a sequence like "I collected my four belongings and left" would probably be correctly understood as "I checked out and left nothing behind", but it would not pass as *idiomatic* – whereas in Spanish this use of "cuatro" (four) is a current way of speaking.

So the first interpretation in Spanish would be that the woman took off what few undergarments (of different types) she was wearing. Only on second thought would this interpretation then have to be reconsidered as literally meaning 4 indeed – because those undergarments are all of one single identical type. The woman must have been wearing them one over the other, onion-like.

Whatever dress-code might prevail ordinarily, today's carnival sets her free to wear what she likes in this summer-heat – so what are those four corsets good for, hidden under her dress?

The answer is as simple as it is cruel: Lorca's Gypsy is informing us (on second thought in Spanish, rather straightforwardly in English) that the woman is extremely fat and that she squeezes herself into those corsets so as to produce at least a minimum of shapeliness – and that merely two or three corsets would be too weak to contain her expansive flesh. (Leonard Cohen's gentleman Gypsy conceals those four corsets, along with the man's clothes, in "the rest".)

**L9-12:** This quatrain is in present tense, stating permanent facts. Even in his retrospect, Lorca's Gypsy clings to some retarding element in order to compose himself. And back at the time of the event, composure means an effort to stabilise or regain his faltering erection after the shock of having seen the woman's naked body.

**L13-14:** The woman is ready and inviting – very inviting.

**L15-16:** The rear halves of her legs are relatively cold from the damp of the riverbank, and the man feels this cold as she closes her legs around him. So he must eventually have taken off his clothes, after all.

**L17-18:** The first line of this couplet is one syllable short, and the second line does not compensate for it. Here Lorca steps outside the poetic rules indeed – and for a valid reason. The Spanish verb *correr* means both *to run* and *to have an orgasm*, and because the line is one syllable short we are invited to have a closer look. In the context, the orgasm is what we are supposed to see – and since the English verb of movement with the second meaning *to have an orgasm* is the verb *to come*, the translation *I ran* instead of *I came* would miss the point.

**L19-20:** Those last two lines of the quatrain do not inform us whether or not the woman had an orgasm as well, and behind this absence of information is hidden what we are supposed to understand here: in his retrospect, Lorca's Gypsy doesn't give a damn – another "hueco" (empty space), to be understood as reflecting the absence of the husband.

**L21-24:** This quatrain is in present tense again, but this time it is the actual present of the narration.

The woman said things which we are to understand (1) as typically female, so a heterosexual man like Lorca's Gypsy couldn't use them (but maybe a homosexual man could, addressing his male lover), and (2) as helping the man restore his failing erection – and here the would-be he-man does not wish to acknowledge the fact that he direly needed such assistance!

Both the man and the woman understand what is going on here, and they know that the other one knows, and this is extremely embarrassing for the man. His discretion is not actually protecting the woman and her words – he is protecting his own wounded masculine pride.

**L25-28:** The man does not know yet that the woman is married, and so he is not rejecting her as yet. He takes her back to the village, but in the retrospective tale she is "sucia" (soiled), and the "besos" (kisses) should easily be understood as sperm.

Around them and along their way back, other men's "espadas" (swords) are still active.

#### Stanza 4

This stanza recounts events that are preceded by an undetermined lapse of time, at least one day, probably several days. In this lapse of time, Lorca's Gypsy learns what Leonard Cohen's Gypsy knew beforehand – that the woman is married. Lorca's Gypsy now has to work out what it all means, and to work out his own position. The result is that he gets cross at the woman (1) for having abused his charity, as I said before, and (2) for having been witness to his failing sexual prowess and for having expertly taken over with her sexually arousing talk. The woman, confusingly, gave him charity where he thinks that she abused his own benevolence.

In this confused state, he elaborates his vengeance and buys the "costurero" (sewing basket).

**L1-2:** The man macho-like reaffirms his ego. Lorca uses the tolerance of the 7 + 9 syllable couplet in order to highlight this fact.

**L3-4:** The Gypsy makes the woman a supremely insulting present, in keeping with his resentment. The "costurero" (sewing basket) should easily be understood as representing her vagina, large, containing many *needles*. The meaning is that it is not his own *needle* that is too small – it is of normal size, like those of all her other men –, but that her vagina is too large.

And that's not all. The sewing basket is lined with "raso" (satin), representing the woman's sex-appeal – but the satin is "pajizo" (straw-coloured), which means withered. The woman is represented in this gift as an over-sexed and worn-out ageing hag, much worse than an old maid.

In this context, not only her four corsets unpleasantly come back to mind, but also the racemes of the hyacinths, the silt mud, and her being soiled.

Leonard Cohen's Gypsy has a different explanation for the size of the woman's vagina, and he does not tell us what he gave her. He takes his time and behaves so as not to make her sad (allowing her to reinterpret the sewing basket as a joke). Between him and the woman there is a complicity that transcends the abjection of the gift – those two people almost seem to know Lorca's poem...

**L5-8:** In the last quatrain the Gypsy reaffirms his position of sexual charity towards the woman, a charity she didn't need – because he sees the (basically unpleasant...) task of having sex with her as her husband's duty.

The term "mozuela" (lassie) remains misunderstood between the two of them, and the Gypsy's position keeps on oscillating between the uncertainty of gullibility, failing virility and self-doubt on the one hand and the over-compensation of vile machismo on the other hand.

Not finding a synthesis, he can go on like this forever.

## Annexe – Comments on poetic rules as observed in ten more "Romancero" poems

Let me introduce my considerations here with a quote from the 2002 bilingual edition (Spanish – German) by Martin von Koppenfels, "Zigeunerromanzen – Primer romancero gitano", page 116, where the question is nicely summed up:

Bei Lorca gibt es Romanzen mit ungeraden Verszahlen und solche, die mit dem reimenden Vers beginnen, was dem Romanzenpuristen ein Greuel sein muß, weil sein altkastilisches Ohr immer nur Verspaare wahrnimmt, die für ihn eine unauflösliche Einheit bilden. Ein Beispiel für solche Asymmetrie ist das Gedicht *Die untreue Ehefrau*.

(Lorca has romances with odd numbers of lines and ones that begin with the rhyming line, something any romance purist must abhor, since his Old-Castilian ear will always perceive couplets only, as forming indissoluble units. One example for such asymmetry is the poem *The unfaithful wife*.)

The cited example has been treated above, and I hope to have shown in how far Lorca ignores or respects the poetic rules of the *romance* – and to which purpose and effect. In the following let's have a look at the other apparent *asymmetries*, in the rest of Lorca's book.

Here again the two rules of the Spanish *romance* :

- 1) 8 syllables per line, or at least 16 syllables per couplet.
- 2) Each couplet of 16 syllables ends on a rhyme, featuring the same pair of vowels throughout the poem – which means that the rhymes have to be on the even lines (of 8 syllables).

Leafing through Lorca's "Primer romancero gitano" (First collection of Gypsy ballads), here the list of poems with *asymmetries* :

- 3 *Reyerta* – hereafter "Poem 3"
- 4 *Romance sonámbulo* – hereafter "Poem 4"
- 6 *La casada infiel* (discussed above)
- 9 *San Raphael*, subtitled *Córdoba* – hereafter "Poem 9"
- 10 *San Gabriel*, subtitled *Sevilla* – hereafter "Poem 10"
- 12 *Muerte de Antoñito el Camborio* – hereafter "Poem 12"
- 14 *El emplazado*, subtitled *Romance del emplazado* – hereafter "Poem 14"
- 15 *Romance de la Guardia Civil española* – hereafter "Poem 15"
- 16 *Martirio de Santa Olalla* – hereafter "Poem 16"
- 17 *Burla de Don Pedro a caballo*, subtitled *Romance con lagunas*  
(Burlesque of Don Pedro on horseback / Ballad with lagoons) – hereafter "Poem 17"
- 18 *Thamar y Amnón* – hereafter "Poem 18"

These are the apparent *asymmetries*, and my answers:

● **In the book as a whole** we find four occurrences of **diphthongs** integrated into the rhymes (replacing the respective simple vowels). In these cases the result will depend very much on the speaker, who might pronounce them as clear diphthongs, or who might contract them to single *orthodox* vowels, if I may say so:

- Poem 3, last line: "aceite" – rhyme **ey-e** instead of **e-e**
- Poem 10, L8: "aire" – rhyme **ay-e** instead of **a-e**
- Poem 10, L22: "sauces" – rhyme **au-e** instead of **a-e**
- Poem 18, S3L28: "flautas" – rhyme **au-a** instead of **a-a**

● **Poem 4:** There are two **meaningful** double *asymmetries* answering each other, namely

- S2L8: 9 syllables instead of 8; and ending on "agrias" (sour), rhyme **a-i-a** instead of **a-a**
- S4L4: 9 syllables instead of 8; and ending on "lagrimas" (tears), rhyme **a-i-a** instead of **a-a**

The *sour* agaves (of whose *sweet* fruit tequila is made) and the trail of *tears* (left behind alongside the trail of blood) are two deliberate irregularities meant to connect in the reader's mind.

● **Poems 9, 10, and 16:** They consist of a "Part I" and a "Part II", and Poem 16 also has a "Part III". All those *Parts* have different rhymes, but those rhymes are consistent within each *Part*.

● **Poem 12:** The couplets are not rhyming on a pair of vowels, but on one single vowel: *i* only. Also, those one-vowel rhyming even lines have only 7 syllables, instead of 8.

But all those rhyming *i* vowels are stressed, whereas normally the two syllables of a rhyme would be *stressed + unstressed*. If therefore we introduce the idea of an additional mute syllable to each of those even lines, a syllable thus necessarily unstressed, we end up with the *orthodox* pattern again – except that the rhyme would be *i-[mute]*. This seems all the more plausible as those lines, with no exception, end with a punctuation sign marking a pause: full stop, comma, colon, question mark, exclamation mark.

(Lorca was a musician, too, and in musical notation the pauses are specifically marked in writing.)

● **Poem 14:** Here it is indeed S1L1 and the subsequent odd lines that rhyme on *a-o* throughout the first stanza – except if we count the subtitle as one additional line of 8 syllables (equally rhyming on *a-o*, too). This seems all the more pertinent as later, in S5L6 and S5L8, both the subtitle and S1L1 are being answered.

Then there is S2L6, a line of 9 syllables and ending on *a-u-o* instead of *a-o* – except if "sonámbulos" (sleepwalking) is pronounced *sonámb'los*, in which case the line is *orthodox* again, with 8 syllables and rhyming on *a-o*. But in any case our attention is drawn to the fact that the anvils, which we expect to be immobile, are sleepwalking under the hammers singing the sleeplessness of rider and horse.

● **Poem 15:** There is a double *asymmetry* in S5L4: 9 syllables instead of 8; and ending on "la beneméríta" – rhyme on *e-i-a* instead of *e-a*, a full-fledged poetic irregularity.

The term "La Beneméríta" (The Well-deserving one) means the "Guardia Civil" (Civil Guard). In this poem, "Romance de la Guardia Civil española" (Ballad of the Spanish Civil Guard), they ransack – forty armed men strong – the Gypsy town of Jerez de la Frontera in a nightly attack, mutilating, raping and murdering people, plundering and burning down houses.

So the poetic irregularity must be understood as fully intentional, meant to highlight the cruelly ironical contradiction: those guards, paid to maintain the public order, are its worst enemies.

● **Poem 17:** This burlesque can indeed be considered as *unorthodox* – but it is a "burla" (burlesque), as the title says. It is a mockery, and yet only the three "lagunas" (lagoons) actually step completely out of bonds, as do a river's lagoons. The three main parts stick to the riverbed of the *orthodox* rhyme pattern on the even lines (in *e-o*), although with a flow of less than 16 syllables per couplet:

6 6 6 5 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 5 — 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 6 7 — 7 7 7 6 7 7 7 4 7 7 7 7 7 5 7 5 7 7

All of this – including "La casada infiel" (The unfaithful wife) – results in two conclusions:

1) The observed *asymmetries* can be accounted for as meaningful, and/or they fall into the margin of individual ways of pronouncing the Spanish language.

2) Lorca has most definitely his very own manner of conforming to poetic rules, but he *does* conform; and the purist's *Old-Castilian ear* – more easily than the eye! – will probably recognise and acknowledge his craftsmanship (and quite a bit more...) rather than *abhor* it.

In what concerns those 11 poems, I hope to have shown that Lorca is not some kind of poetising clown who is lucky enough to benefit from the odd accidental stroke of genius, but that on the contrary his poems are brilliantly accomplished craftsmanship *coupled* with poetic genius.

In what concerns "Poeta en Nueva York" (Poet in New York), the main accusation held against Lorca is his *surrealism* – politely avoiding the term *nonsense*, but meaning it. There, consulting a dictionary might come in handy, revealing how sensible his poems are in reality.

But that's another chapter.